

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LOME 00609 211843Z

67

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02 CIAE-00 CIEP-02

COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 H-03 INR-10

INT-08 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 OMB-01 PM-07 RSC-01 SAM-01

SCI-06 SPC-03 SS-20 STR-08 TRSE-00 DRC-01 NEA-10 PA-04

PRS-01 USIA-15 /177 W

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R 211228Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7440

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, TO

SUBJ: GOT EXPLANATION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS PRICE INCREASE

REF: LOME 591

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY JEAN TEVI HELD NEWS CONFERENCE MARCH 19 TO DISCUSS LATEST INCREASE (SECOND WITHIN THREE MONTHS) OF PRICES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN TOGO. TEVI CRITICIZED ARAB GOVERNMENTS FOR THEIR UNHELPFUL ROLE, BUT SAID THAT GOT WAS IN PROCESS OF MAKING DIRECT APPROACHES TO "FRIENDLY COUNTRIES" IN EFFORTS TO EASE SITUATION FOR CONSUMER. END SUMMARY

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PAGE 02 LOME 00609 211843Z

2. DURING COURSE OF MARCH 19 PRESS INTERVIEW, MIN COMMERCE
TEVI MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A. ON REASONS BEHIND PRICE INCREASE - (REFTEL) - BASIC
REASON FOR PRICE HIKES LAY IN WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON OF RISING
OIL PRICES AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS GOVERNMENT MEASURE
TO INCREASE ITS REVENUES. ARAB OIL PRODUCERS HAD BANDED
TOGETHER LEAVING AFRICANS TO "GO HUNGRY" ("NOUS LAISSER
SUR NOTRE FAIM"). GOVERNMENT HAD BELIEVED UNTIL VERY LAST
MOMENT THAT REDUCTIONS WOULD BE MADE, BUT ARAB OIL PRODUCERS
WERE UNABLE TO DO MORE THAN GIVE THREE-MONTH RESPITE. PRESENT
PRICE LEVELS ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN IN EFFECT FOR NEXT THREE
MONTHS.

B. ON OIL PURCHASES FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES - NIGERIA,
CONGO AND GABON ARE ALL MEMBER OF OPEC WHICH DETERMINES
PRICE POLICY. EVEN IF TOGO HAD ACCESS TO NIGERIAN SUPPLIES,
THERE WOULD BE NO ASSURANCES OF RECEIVING FAVORABLE TREATMENT.
NIGERIAN REFINED OUTPUT COULD ONLY FILL A FRACTION OF ITS
OWN NEEDS AND NIGERIAN OIL WAS BEING AUCTIONED AT PRICES EXCEEDING
POSTED LEVELS.

C. ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO PROTECT CONSUMER - TWO LINES
OF APPROACH BEING PURSUED:

--OFFICIAL DEMARCHES TO FRIENDLY PRODUCER COUNTRIES, WITH
PERSONAL MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT EYADEMA, SEEKING TO NEGOTIATE
DELIVERY CONTRACTS. RESULTS OF DEMARCHES CANNOT BE FORECAST
AT THIS TIME.

--CONTROL OF RETAIL PRICES BY RESTRICTING PROFIT MARGINS
OF OIL DISTRIBUTORS, REQUIRING THEM TO SPREAD THEIR LOSSES
INCURRED SINCE LAST OCTOBER OVER LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.

D. ON STATE MONOPOLY OVER DISTRIBUTION AND SALES OF PETROLEUM
PRODUCTS- "PREMATURE" TO ENVISAGE NOW THAT STATE WILL TAKE
INITIATIVE TO SET UP MONOPLY FOR DISTRIBUTION OF OIL PRODUCTS,
BUT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PLANNED OIL REFINERY WILL ENABLE
TOGO TO AVOID CERTAIN COSTS SHE MUST NOW BEAR.

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PAGE 03 LOME 00609 211843Z

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3. COMMENT: WHILE CRITICISM OF ARAB OIL PRODUCERS NOT
EMPHASIZED IN TOGO-PRESSE ARTICLE, TEVI'S STATEMENT MARKS FIRST
TIME SINCE GOT BREAK WITH ISRAEL THAT PROMINENT MEMBER OF
GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLICLY COMMENTED ADVERSELY ON ARAB OIL PRICE

POLICIES, ALTHOUGH SOME OFFICIALS AND MANY TOGOLESE HAVE
PRIVATELY BEEN SKEPTICAL OF RESULTS OF GOT'S MID-EAST POLICY.
DICKINSON

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30 JUN 2005

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